GHENT, AND ITS ANCIENT ARCHITECTURE.

There is, perhaps, no place in Europe, that has more points of interest than the ancient capital of East Flanders; her treasures of art, her splendid memorials of loftier times, her grand specimens of ecclesiastical and domestic architecture, present a combination of attractions very difficult to equal. So good a general idea of the city of Ghent has been given by Roscoe in his "Tour through Belgium," that we are induced to make use of it. He says—"There is something repulsive and dreary in the first sight of the decayed massive ramparts, dark narrow streets, high garden walls, and tall pointed edifices of old Ghent; before you become acquainted with the extent and beauty of the buildings and institutions, which do so much honour to the taste and enterprize of the inhabitants. Streams, bridges, and canals; porticos, theatres, and public offices; spires, towers, and churches; saint's shrines, hotels, and seminaries, every where meet the eye as you advance, giving a high opinion of the character and habits of the people; while the antique air of the Gothic houses, and the vast monuments and remains of art bear testimony to the affluence and grandeur of its former inhabitants. It is this mixed character which gives it, like Venice, an air of solitary majesty and loneliness; broken in the same way by a number of islands formed by the confluence of different rivers—the Scheldt and the Ilys, the Liese and the Moere, which are connected by a succession of little bridges. It is this, also, which presents so many striking points of view, and picturesque objects and effects to the eye of the painter; the dark waters, the hanging balconies, the shadows of the massy walls, the rich architectural ornaments: and along the Grand Canal the curious antique buildings, the fallen arch, the boats moored under some vast ivy mantled ruin, besides other parts of the ancient town, abound in localities which fix the eye and the mind by their interesting associations."

Pages might easily be filled by a mere enumeration of the antiquities of this fine old Flemish town; the great difficulty is in deciding what is worthy of the first notice, but the Cathedral of St. Bavon may fairly claim precedence; it is said to be the finest church in Belgium, and although this may be disputed, as far as architectural beauty is concerned, it is so in point of decoration. The length and height are of magnificent dimensions, and the choir a perfect magazine of sculpture. A monument by Duquesnoy, to the memory of a bishop of Trieste, deserves especial notice, as the finest work of the kind in Flanders. In the nave stands one of the pulpits for which Belgium is so celebrated; it was executed by Delvaux, a native of Ghent. It is worked in white marble and dark oak (by no means a good combination). The crypt of this church has been highly spoken of by various travellers, but to our mind it will not bear a comparison either as to extent or beauty, with some in our own country, particularly those of Canterbury, Gloucester, and Rochester.

The church is enriched by a great number of fine paintings, including some of rare excellence by Rubens and the two Van Eycks. Although the remaining churches in Ghent are quite worthy of attentive examination, we must pass them over without further notice to say a word or two in praise of the town-hall. Incomplete as it is, it cannot fail to excite the admiration of the most casual observer. It was commenced in 1481, from the designs of Jean Stassens, who died in 1527, leaving the building unfinished. It was then confided to Just Pollett, whose first business was to alter the design of his predecessor, and to complete the work in a style totally at variance with the part already executed. Had the design been carried out as originally projected, it would have been one of the most splendid edifices in Europe.

Ghent is particularly rich in ancient domestic architecture; one building possessing great historical interest is the palace of the Counts of Flanders, in which we also feel nationally interested, as it was the birth-place of our famous John of Gaunt. Although there is little of architectural detail left, it is much to be regretted that a place so full of pleasant associations should have been turned into a manufactory, yet such is the case. Another building which has shared the same fate is the old palace called the "Cour des Princes," the birth-place of Charles V. It seems rather inconsistent that a city like Ghent, proud of its magnificent relics of departed greatness, should quietly consign to oblivion two such testimonials of its former power.

By the side of the Grand Canal (finished in 1822, at a cost of one million francs), are several fine specimens of domestic architecture, the most remarkable being the subject of the illustration; it is known as Watermans' Hall, and is at present occupied as a private dwelling-house. The front is entirely of stone, and although it has suffered somewhat from time, and that more wanton destroyer, man, it is still a fine specimen of the architecture of the 16th century; the windows on the ground-floor have a centre mullion and transom of wood, evidently modern, which are not shewn in the engraving; the steps are also of recent date, part of the base mouldings of the entrance having been cut away to make room for them; some square openings of various sizes have been made in the basement, and are omitted. Judging by the abrupt termination of the horizontal mouldings, and the imperfect arches at either end, we are inclined to think that this house is only a part of a range of buildings of the same period and style; how far this conjecture is reasonable let others decide. The house is said to have been built in 1522.

One word as to the encouragement given here to the fine arts. The schools for the study of architecture, painting, and sculpture, have been celebrated from the time of Charles V., and have not yet fallen into disrepute, the Government having taken steps to procure the most approved system of instruction, and to make it available to all who may wish to profit by it. Exhibitions take place here every year, and the national exposition once in three years; at the latter, prizes are given by the government for the most talented productions exhibited. It will be seen, that in Belgium, no means are left untried to give that encouragement to art which it should everywhere receive.

Figure 2 shews the plan of one of the piers and window jambs. W. C.

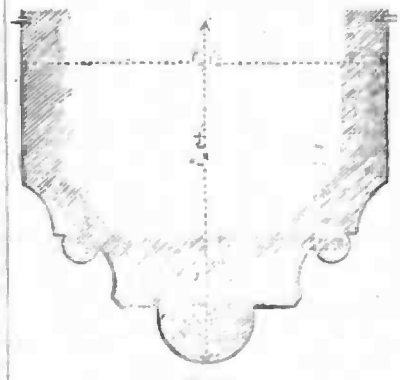
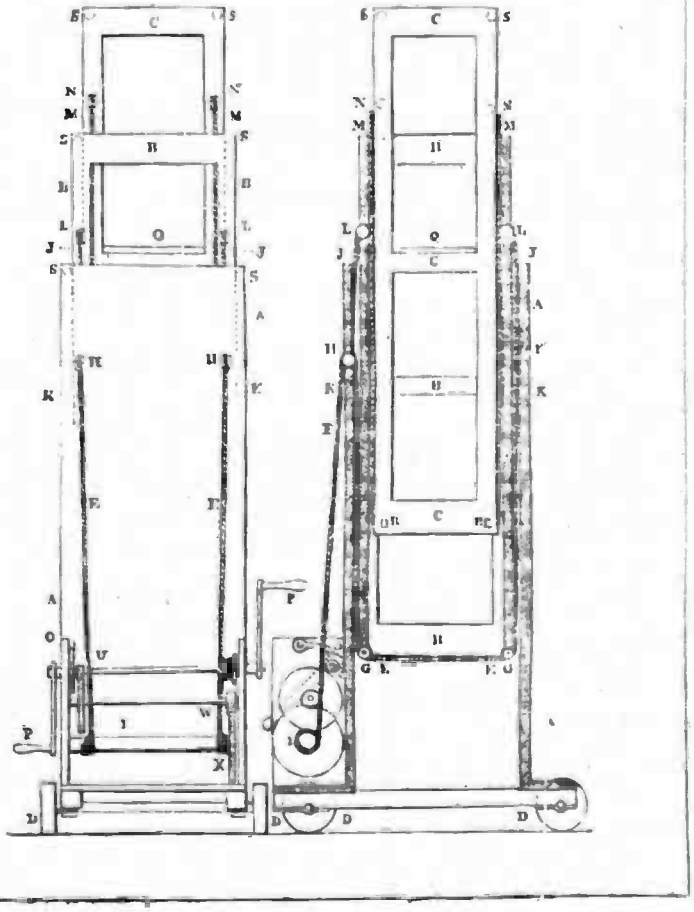


Fig. 2.

ELL'S ADJUSTABLE SCAFFOLD, OBSERVATORY, OR FIRE-ESCAPE.

The annexed diagrams will afford our readers a sufficient idea of the ingenious machine represented, without much minute description. It is an improvement of Reeves's, which gained the silver medal of the Society of Arts, and consists of a series of hollow rectangular frames, AA, BB, CC, &c., sliding one within another, after the manner of the tubes of a telescope, mounted on wheels, DD, and hoisted or lowered by ropes, EE, JJ, MM, working on rollers, GG, LL, and pulleys, HH, NN, by means of winch handles, PP, turning the barrel, I, round which is twisted the lower end of the rope, which thus passes successively along the several frames, within each other, drawing them one out of the sheath of the

ELL'S ADJUSTABLE SCAFFOLD, &c.



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